

Comparative Park Management Models

New Yorkers for Parks

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Introduction: Purpose of the Project and Usefulness to New York City

Why is this paper needed now? In the current fiscal climate, New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P) continues to produce useful policy analysis and relevant assessments of the current conditions of parks to ensure, not only that parks remain on the public agenda, but also that New York City makes the most of available public resources and consistently looks for new ways to inject the parks system with additional funding and management innovations. Policy improvements are regularly made through the assessment of “best practices” and alternative models developed in other municipalities or other disciplines. This report highlights various strategies implemented in other municipalities nation-wide that may be utilized to increase the efficacy of the NYC parks management system and its funding strategies.

This report serves as a supplement to the City Council District Profiles and the Report Card on Parks – two NY4P original research publications. Through photos and budget analysis, the Profiles document a system in need and provide communities with up-to-date relevant information about their parks and their neighborhoods. The Report Card provides a publicly accessible park-by-park performance assessment that identifies neighborhood parks in most need and what services, if targeted, could improve the state of those parks. The findings of this report will provide NY4P and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) with ideas that can be incorporated into new initiatives that must be created to address problems that afflict our parks system.

This report consists of analyses of the public park systems of Chicago, San Francisco, and Boston. These three cities have been selected based on their similar population to acreage ratios, as noted in *Inside City Parks*, by Peter Harnik, a seminal report on the park systems of major US cities. When discussing park and open space policy improvements, it is important to note the political and social role that these open spaces play in the daily life of constituents. In lower density municipalities, residents often have access to open spaces other than the public park systems. In Phoenix, Arizona and Portland, Oregon, low and medium density cities respectively, most residents have backyards in addition to a public park system. As Harnik notes, “This breakdown helps compensate for the fact that a greater number of residents in low-density cities have backyards, while more residents of high-densities cities have rail transit, and other ways to gain access to their parks.”¹

In *Inside City Parks*, Peter Harnik categorizes Boston, Chicago and San Francisco as high-density urban areas. Though different in some ways, these cities share three important similarities with New York City:

- Open space is at a premium,
- There is a diverse constituency,
- Residents often travel away from home to access parks and open spaces, whether across the street or across town.

These municipalities share a similar culture relating to open space and the way in which residents use these spaces, creating a different political environment for park policy than in less dense urban areas. Though no other park system is as large as New York City’s, these

¹ Peter Harnik, *Inside City Parks*, Washington, DC: ULI –Urban Land Institute. p. i.

municipalities have implemented various programs aimed at specific components of their park systems that lend useful lessons to all park managers in similarly dense urban environments.

This document is designed to suggest successful strategies that have the potential for implementation in New York City. The various mechanisms serve as a starting point for a discussion of innovative management and funding strategies for New York City and New York State.

In addition, three appendices are included in this report. The first details various New York State municipalities, exploring how city parks across the state are managed and funded. Although these cities are often less dense and their park systems are smaller, an assessment at this level sets the framework for statewide implementations and funding initiatives for urban park systems.

By way of example, attached to this report is a second appendix – a list of organizations supporting the state Environmental Bond Act. New Yorkers for Parks is one of two urban-focused open space advocacy organizations, in addition to the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, supporting the renewed legislation of this funding resource – and the only urban parks organization.

Within the EPF, there is a dedicated fund for municipal park systems. The EPF provides a baseline of \$125 million a year in funds for projects in three main program areas: open space, parks and solid waste.² In the 2003-2004 EPF Budget (some of which was diverted to “relief funds”), a total of approximately \$30 million was allocated to the “Parks Projects” section of the EPF. Of that, only \$5 million was allocated for the “Local (Municipal) Parks/HP Grants”, representing 16% of “Parks Projects” funding and only 4% of available total funds. The remainder of the funds is directed towards a variety of programs under the three major program areas. New York City alone makes up 40% of the state population and provides 44% of the real estate transfer tax monies that comprise 90% of the EPF revenue sources.³ Significant effort must be made to build an urban park statewide coalition to ensure that more funding is allocated by the State Legislature through the EPF. The detail presented in this report is the first step towards a statewide effort for increased funding to urban areas.

The third appendix details alternative funding models that have been initiated in a variety of municipalities and presents ideas for innovative funding models for consideration by New York City or New York State. A long-term but necessary effort must be made to identify and implement a dedicated revenue stream.

² Environmental Advocates, “New York State’s Environmental Protection Fund, An Overview and History”. (2002) www.eany.org/public_html/EPF_news.html

³ New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, “New York’s Urban Environment: Under Funded and Under Served: Preliminary Report on State Environmental Funding Programs (1996-2000).” p. 8.

Comparative Analysis of Park Management Models

The municipal analysis is structured as follows:

- Description of departmental organization -- Commissioners, management structure, etc.
- Highlights:
 - Public and private partnership programs
 - Funding models and strategies
- Recommended best practices that could be applied to the New York City park system.

San Francisco: San Francisco Recreation and Park Department

Current Context

In 1998-1999, the City and County of San Francisco issued a large-scale capital assessment of the City's neighborhoods, including parks and open spaces. Following this assessment, San Francisco voters approved propositions in 2000 authorizing additional funding to revitalize the city's parks and recreation facilities. As a condition of the new funding, the proposition required the city to formulate a five-year strategic (long-term plan) and five-year operational plan (short-term maintenance and capital plans) to guide future park development and maintenance.

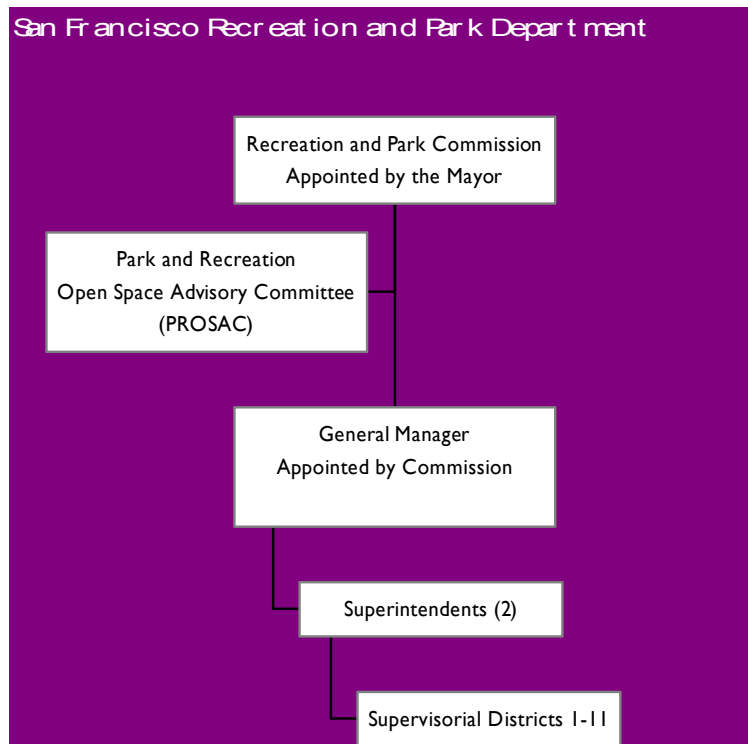
There is ample anecdotal evidence that San Francisco parks were in need of such a vision. Many of the city's recreation centers were built over 50 years ago, when voters last approved bond money for park improvements. Playground structures were outdated and dangerous. Bathrooms were locked to keep out the homeless and prevent drug dealing and crimes. (SF Chronicle: 7/21/01, 1/12/01) The strategic and operational plans focus on reforming the system into a more accountable and business-like form of government that is responsive to the citizens of San Francisco – the City's "customers."

Organizational Structure and Overall Plan

"The mission of the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department (RPD) is to rejuvenate the human spirit by providing safe parks, quality programs and employees that demonstrate our commitment to customer satisfaction."

City of San Francisco

RPD is a mayoral agency under the direction of General Manager Elizabeth Goldstein, who is appointed by the seven-member unpaid Recreation and Park Commission. The Commission is appointed by the Mayor and holds final departmental appropriations approval. In addition to the Commission, the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Advisory Committee (PROSAC) provides community oversight and facilitates public input and review of RPD's strategic, operational, and capital plans. PROSAC is composed of 23 representatives appointed by the city Board of Supervisors to serve two-year terms.



San Francisco Parks Profile	
Municipal Park Acres	3,400
Population	776,733
Municipal Park Acres Per 1000 Residents	4.38
Municipal Park Acres as a % of Total City	11.4%

The system's properties were mostly constructed at the turn of the twentieth century, at what were then the edges of developed city. The Recreation and Park Department was formed in 1949 as a consolidation of the parks and recreation

divisions of various city agencies. In total, the RPD manages and operates 230 properties on nearly

3,400 acres. The system includes neighborhood parks and playgrounds as well as larger facilities such as Golden Gate Park, 3Com Park (formerly Candlestick Park), a camp, golf courses, and a marina.

Planning

In 1998, the City and County of San Francisco commissioned a team of architects, urban planners, and landscape architects to complete the “Great Parks for a Great City” Assessment Project. The Assessment was seen as the first step toward renovating and rejuvenating San Francisco’s park system, which showed signs of long-term maintenance and capital neglect (*Great Parks, I*). This in-depth capital assessment documented park and facility capital improvements necessary to update and maintain the City’s resources. The project also identified changing demographic and recreational trends in San Francisco and the need to prepare the RPD to respond to a changing community. It also recommended the formulation of a Strategic Plan, which was drafted by the RPD in 2001-2002 with public input overseen by the Neighborhood Parks Council.

Strategic Plan

Strategic decisions are fundamental, directional, and future-oriented, with a long-term planning horizon: they are policies designed to formulate the most efficient means to accomplish the RPD’s mission. The priorities identified through the initial strategic planning process determined the direction and focus of the strategic plan. The following focus areas were defined:

- Communications
- Facility Design and Development
- Funding and Revenue Generation
- Maintenance Resources
- Organizational Development
- Partnerships and Volunteers
- Programs, Services and Facility Use

Each category corresponds to a number of performance measures that are used to gauge the success of the RPD in attaining its strategic goals. For example, one of the Maintenance Resources performance measures is: “Department-wide Equipment Inventory Database completed FY 02-03 with data entered to track inventory, purchases, repairs and items removed from service.” The Strategic Plan puts into place larger goals and tracking mechanisms for the essential areas of service delivery.

Operational Plan

To supplement the Strategic Plan, the assessment project also identified the need for an operational plan. The operational plan will outline the day-to-day functioning of the RPD; the operational plan will implement strategic decisions and have a short-term horizon.

Now part of the City Charter, the proposition requires that the RPD “prepare a five-year Operational Plan, to be updated annually, detailing proposed improvements to the Department’s services and responsiveness to customer needs.” The Operational Plan, with input by PROSAC, is subject to consideration and approval by the Park and Recreation Commission.

To complete the operational plan the RPD has formed ten operations teams, divided in the following way:

- Communications - Internal and External;
- Park & Facility Design and Development;
- Park & Facility Maintenance;
- Funding and Revenue Generation;

- Organizational Development – Structure, Performance and Accountability;
- Training and Development;
- Staff Resources;
- Partnerships and Volunteers;
- Programs;
- Facilities and Services.

The initial Operational Plan is currently in Cycle 2 of a 3-cycle process. After each stage is drafted, it is reviewed through a peer review process and modified if necessary. When complete, the plan will include measurable performance standards for the RPD. In developing performance standards, the following issues are being considered:

- Public safety, including the reduction of environmental and other hazards, safe equipment operations and safe pesticide use;
- Detailed maintenance work plans for every facility, including preventative maintenance;
- Arboreal maintenance and reforestation of all parks;
- Facility and landscape cleanliness, including timely graffiti removal;
- Availability and cleanliness of restrooms;
- Maintenance of park and facility signage, furniture and amenities.

At this point in the planning process, the RPD anticipates that its operational plan will focus on the following:

- Developing and promoting job specific training opportunities;
- Improving and streamlining the facility design and development contracting process;
- Improving the condition of athletic fields through better design and maintenance systems;
- Developing an improved computer system to track revenue and expenditures;
- Establishing program development and training opportunities for community members involved in athletic programs (sportsmanship, etc.);
- Improving safety and security in parks and facilities through preventative and proactive measures.

Areas that are identified through the planning process and found to be less operational in nature will continue to be reviewed through the strategic plan.

Evaluation

At this time, San Francisco RPD does not have a performance measurement tool to enforce a base level of standards. They are partnering with the local parks advocacy organization, the Neighborhood Parks Council, in a citizen-driven parks inspection program called “ParkScan.” The Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) is a citywide organization that advocates for clean, safe, and enjoyable parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities. The NPC coordinates a network of 100+ volunteer park groups, providing them with direction and support in organizing and advocacy, fundraising and public outreach, scheduling park clean-ups, and planning special events such as concerts and festivals.

“ParkScan” elements are rated as satisfactory or unsatisfactory and are prioritized by importance. Notes and pictures accompany the rating forms. The information is then uploaded onto the ParkScan website for the public as well as sent to the RPD or other managing agency, whose response is also available on the site. Though in its infancy, the ParkScan program promises to increase the transparency and accountability of local government, and involves the community in the care and stewardship of parks. Parkscan can be accessed at <http://www.parkscansf.org/>.

Partnerships

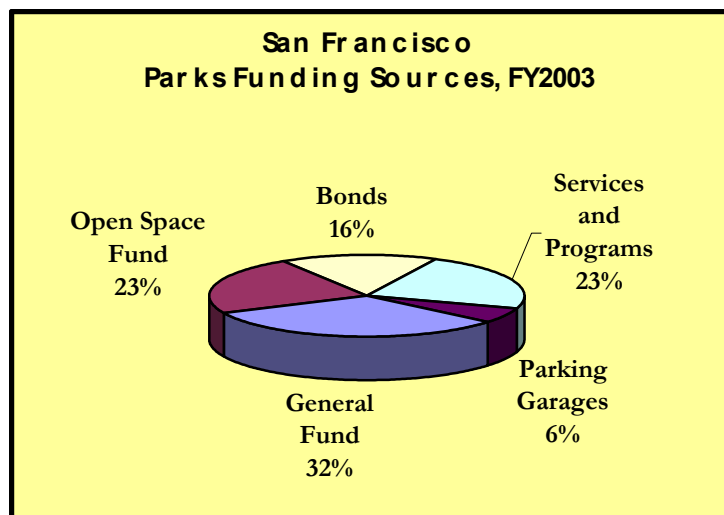
Funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the ParkScan project is a public-private partnership between the NPC and the San Francisco RPD. As noted, members of San Francisco park groups are trained and equipped with handheld computers to record park conditions across the city. Computers and data have been configured for use with geographic information systems mapping software, so that problem areas requiring additional attention are immediately evident and comparisons are easily made between different areas of the city.

Indicators for park conditions and cleanliness have been developed in conjunction with the RPD to maximize the efficacy and usefulness of citizen inspections. The ParkScan project has received excellent feedback from the RPD, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Technology and Information Services, and the Comptroller's Office.

Additionally, the RPD also organizes its own Community Catalyst volunteer program, which works with the NPC and smaller groups to assist the city with park maintenance. There are over 100 neighborhood parks groups in San Francisco working with smaller parks and playgrounds.

Funding

A mix of traditional and alternative funding streams support the San Francisco RPD. Approximately one third of funding for the RPD comes from the city's general fund. Twenty-three percent of the RPD budget is raised through the Open Space Fund, generated from property tax revenue and dedicated to parks acquisition and maintenance (details below). Another twenty-three percent is raised through revenues from departmental programs and the operation of Yacht Harbor that return to the RPD. Six percent of the total revenue is raised from parking garage revenue (www.sfgov.org).



Sixteen percent of the RPD budget comes from the issuance of bonds, which cover capital project expenses (representing approximately one quarter of RPD expenditures for FY '02-'03). Proposition C enables the RPD to request, from the Mayor as needed, authorization for the issuance of revenue bonds to supplement the City's general obligation bonds for RPD capital projects. Proposition C also stipulates the following regarding increases in revenue and savings:

- Net increases in RPD-generated revenues be dedicated to capital and/or maintenance improvements to park facilities;
- New revenues from outside sources, such as grant or foundation support, shall be used only for enhancement of park and recreational programs, including, but not limited to, capital and/or facility maintenance improvements;
- Overall Department expenditure savings shall be retained by the RPD to be dedicated to one-time expenditures.

In FY '02-'03, the San Francisco RPD's operating budget totaled \$84 million and the capital budget totaled \$28 million: 75% operating and 25% capital. The FY '02-'03 total budget comprises 2% of the city's total operating budget. The budget was funded through the following sources:

- **General Fund Support (32% of FY '02-'03 funding):** funds basic operational costs of the RPD such as revenues and expenditures for recreation programs and services, maintenance of parks and facilities, and administration.
- **Open Space Fund (23% of FY '02-'03 funding):** generated from property tax revenues as enabled by the City Charter and reaffirmed by voter approval of Proposition C. The funds are used for acquisition and development of parks and open space, renovation of existing parks and recreation facilities, maintenance of properties acquired, urban forestry, community gardens, volunteer programs, natural areas management, and after-school recreation programs. Due to an anticipated budget gap for FY '02-'03, the RPD is proposing using \$.9 million from the Open Space Fund to cover expenses, a move that is heavily contested by the community.
- **Bonds (16% of FY '02-'03 funding):** Proposition A, passed by voters in March 2000, enables the City to sell general obligation bonds to generate \$110 million over ten years. The funds are restricted to capital improvements and projected expenditures are outlined in the Capital Plan. Additionally, the passage of Proposition C enables the RPD to request the issuance of revenue bonds as needed to support the Capital Plan.
- **Departmental Programs & Services (23% of FY '02-'03 funding):** revenue generated by RPD programs, including revenues from the operation of the Marina Yacht Harbor, golf fees, and admissions taxes on sporting events.
- **Parking Garages (6% of FY '02-'03 funding):** revenue generated from City-owned parking garages.

The City of San Francisco is currently facing a budget shortfall. The FY '02-'03 budget was \$30 million below that of the previous year, due to decreased earned revenue and a decrease of 16.7% in the apportionment from the city's General Fund. Services such as pool hours have been cut by 17%, and fees at day camps, golf courses, and 3Com Park have increased to help meet the budget gap (City of San Francisco). To eliminate the need for layoffs, the RPD proposed using \$0.9 million from the Open Space Fund as well as other money to preserve 93 positions formerly funded through the general fund.

RPD's proposed FY '03-'04 budget is short \$3.2 million in revenues. Possible solutions to this shortfall include raising fees and adding new revenue generating programs such as fantasy football camps.

Strategies and Lessons

The RPD outlined a clear vision for itself by identifying its needs and future goals, and the city's voters have authorized funding to make the vision a reality. The city took advantage of a confluence of political will and economic opportunity beginning with the "Great Parks for a Great City" Assessment Project in 1998. Both Strategic and Operational Plans outline goals and the required work and capital needed to achieve those goals.

The RPD does not yet have a set of enforceable operational standards, but their partnership with the NPC is the starting point and will evolve into a defined and expected level of service provision. In addition, the project generates civic involvement and interest in the community. The very public accountability established by the ParkScan program helps to determine and provide a basic level of service and maintenance.

Learning from San Francisco, what can New York City do?

- Formulate a **Master Plan** with funding requirements for assessment and management of parks and a focus on responding to constituents as “customers”. This requires a political and economic climate favorable to serious investment in parks, a funding partner to commission the survey, and a citizenry passionate enough about quality parks and green spaces to advocate for real change within the system and work with municipal partners to shape the future plans.
- Initiate a cooperative **ParkScan** program that pairs the community and city government in the care and stewardship of parks, using technology to pinpoint parks and geographic areas that need extra attention. New Yorkers for Parks’ Report Card on Parks uses handheld computers to collect information in a similar way to ParkScan, but the data is not actively responded to by a public agency on a form-by-form basis as is planned in San Francisco. The New York City DPR has announced plans to make reports from their internal inspection program, the Parks Inspection Program, searchable via the web in the next year. This will enable the public to keep better tabs on the DPR’s activities. However, it does not involve the community or foster civic participation and ownership of neighborhood parks in the manner of San Francisco’s ParkScan program.

Chicago: Chicago Park District

Current Context

Chicago's parks system is widely recognized as one of the most progressive and efficient urban parks systems in the country (Harnik). The Chicago Park District (CPD) maintains properties using system-wide service and maintenance guidelines based on those published by the Professional Grounds Management Society. The CPD's funding derives from state enabling legislation that makes the CPD a separate taxing body for dedicated parks funding. The District is able to issue its own bonds for capital projects as well. The CPD created the Department of Natural Resources in 1999 to better manage the care of its properties. Residents of Chicago and CPD employees note the new emphasis on efficiency and maintenance within the parks system, and the difference it has made in the quality of the city's open spaces.

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley has made parks and green spaces a priority since entering office in 1989. In 1993, the Chicago Community Trust funded "CitySpace," a comprehensive open space plan for the city, partnering the City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and the Chicago Public Schools. Completed in 1998, CitySpace identified ways to preserve and expand the amount of green space in the City of Chicago, including the adaptation and use of non-traditional open spaces within the built city, the formation of an intergovernmental oversight panel on green space, and continued advocacy for state and federal funding for urban green spaces (CitySpace).

Organizational Structure and Overall Plan

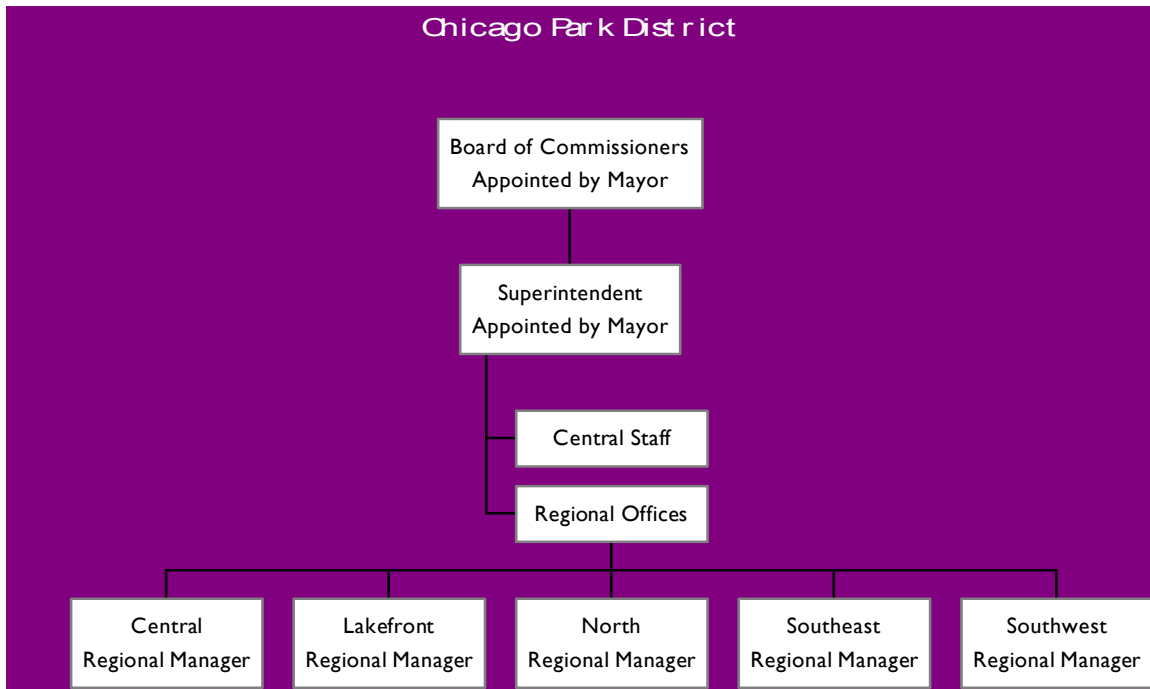
"The Chicago Park District's mission is to:

- Enhance the quality of life throughout Chicago by becoming a leading provider of recreation and leisure opportunities;*
- Provide safe, inviting and beautifully maintained parks and facilities;*
- Create a customer focused and responsive park system."* (Chicago Park District)

Chicago Parks Profile	
Municipal Park Acres	7,300
Population	2,896,016
Municipal Park Acres Per 1000 Residents	2.52
Municipal Park Acres as a % of Total City	5.0%

Formed in 1934, the State of Illinois consolidated the holdings and debt of 22 separate park districts in Chicago into the CPD as a cost-cutting measure during the Depression. Though it was intended to be a separate non-political district, it was used for political patronage and influence during much of its early history. In the last 20 years has it become the independent governing body originally intended, and Chicago's parks have flourished as a result.

The CPD is currently comprised of 552 parks totaling over 7,300 acres of parkland. In addition to traditional neighborhood parks, the CPD manages 33 beaches, nine museums, two conservatories, 16 historic lagoons, and 10 bird and wildlife gardens. In addition, the CPD contracts out management of nine harbors; over 100 concessions; seven golf courses; two driving ranges; three underground parking garages; and Soldier Field, a multi-use recreation facility.



The CPD is overseen by a Parks Superintendent, appointed by the Mayor, who acts as the “Chief Executive Officer” of the District and is responsible for the operation and administration of the CPD. The Mayor also appoints a seven-member Board of Commissioners that works with the Superintendent to oversee the CPD.

The management structure is divided into a central staff and 5 regional offices, each run by a Regional Manager. Parks maintenance falls under the purview of the 2-year old Department of Natural Resources (CDNR), which is responsible for ensuring that the CPD’s 7,300 acres of parks, gardens, fields, and lagoons are meticulously cared for, and is quickly becoming the standard by which other cities measure landscape maintenance and care, having received several awards for landscape maintenance and beautification.

Systemwide, the urgency of repair needs are rated on a scale of Priority 1-5. There are no records tracking the date that a maintenance issue was reported and the date of the actual repair. However, the CPD recently installed an electronic system for tracking maintenance, which will be available to the public on the CPD’s website once it is fully operational.

All CPD properties receive pruning every five years and receive basic services on a regular basis: 24-hour response to graffiti, play lot crews to pick up garbage, and extensive turf care, including aeration, fertilization, and seeding. Though NYC does provide immediate graffiti response, the current budget crisis has impacted its ability to provide some of these other services. For example, the Independent Budget Office reports in its latest budget analysis that cuts to the NYC Parks Department Budget will stretch the pruning cycle in the city from 10 years to 20 years.⁴

To ensure high quality land management, the CDNR employs several focused management programs:

⁴ Independent Budget Office. *Analysis of Mayor’s Preliminary Budget for 2004: Department of Parks and Recreation*. March 2003.

- **Keeper of the Park:** This program gives park patrons a specific staff member to contact about the condition of their park. A Park Keeper develops ownership of their specific park and works with the community to resolve issues and address their concerns. New York City runs a similar program, and posts the name of the Keeper at each park.
- **Elevated Landscape Maintenance:** The Elevated Landscape Maintenance Program (ELM) is a pilot program that uses private companies to maintain select parks. Private companies train in-house CPD staff in maintenance, horticultural, and arboricultural practices. Initially, one park was selected for the ELM program from each region of the CPD. Parks were selected based on the following:
 - A focus on community and neighborhood-size parks;
 - Concentration on historic park landscapes at the community park level;
 - Consultation with the Regional Manager to identify potential parks.
 ELM's goal is to create a plan by which the standard of care can be elevated in every park, and to establish an acceptable level of performance for all parks. Once these goals are met, the CPD would like to develop a 3-5 year plan to achieve the new levels of performance.
- **Focus Parks:** Fifty Focus Parks are selected every few years and receive increased attention to every maintenance level that needs to be addressed. Focus Parks are an effort to coordinate the CPD's cycles of capital and maintenance improvements at 50 parks citywide (10 from each region). From a capital improvement perspective, the Focus Parks program initiates multiple investments in infrastructure on simultaneous schedules. From a maintenance perspective, the program directs facility managers to focus their trades and landscape crews on all components of a designated park. Parks remain in the program as long as is necessary to meet their capital and maintenance needs. The combined efforts produce a significant, holistic upgrade of an entire park.

Partnerships

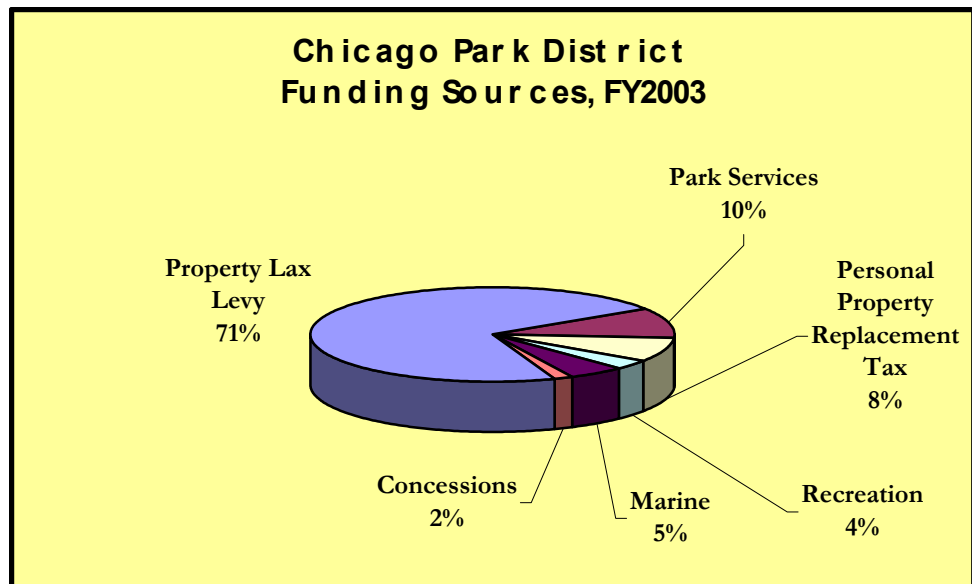
The CPD enjoys a good relationship with Mayor Richard Daley, who has made maintenance of the city's green spaces as well as recreation programs for Chicago's children a top priority of his administration. Chicago has a parks TV station that raises the public profile of parks in the city. The station runs several shows that highlight events and activities in parks. The CPD partners with community groups and city-sponsored organizations to involve both children and adults in the world of parks. The following is a sample:

- **Clean and Green:** Mayor Daley's Clean and Green initiative works with volunteers and organizations on one-day spring cleaning events throughout the city of Chicago, similar to New York City's annual "It's My Park" Day. The day gets community members involved in their neighborhoods and parks. Activities include flower and tree planting, painting, sweeping, and trash collection.
- **Floral Contact/Welcome Gardens:** Certain parks and gardens have flower-filled planters at the entrance that are maintained by volunteers from the community. Areas selected for this program are typically high profile, high visibility entrances along major arterial roads.
- **V.I.P. - Volunteer in the Parks:** The CPD runs an extensive volunteer program that encompasses all age ranges and interest levels. They organize regular "Nature Stewardship Workdays" at parks across the city and post all current volunteer opportunities on their website.

Funding

Since 2001, CPD budgeting has been done on the park level to give a clearer picture of maintenance and capital needs. This also enables a clear comparison of resource allocation for both maintenance and capital funding among similar parks. The CPD system has only four parks that are privately funded. They also have

impact fees that fund park development; parks built with impact fees are then maintained by the CPD and receive no further private funding.



As granted by law, the CPD is an independent taxing authority, so they are assured of a certain level of revenue each year. Notwithstanding this status, from FY1994 to FY2003 the CPD's actual annual budget decreased by modest margins three times from year to year. However, increases in other years have produced a net gain of \$56.6 million in the CPD budget during the 10-year period. The total operating budget for FY2003 was \$338.6 million, an increase from FY2001's budget of \$334.6 million (Chicago Park District).

- **CPD Property Tax Levy (70% FY03 revenue):** In 2003, CPD received \$236.1 million from their property tax levy.
- **Park Services (10% FY03 revenue):** In 2003, \$35.2 million from corporate sponsorships and special contracts (harbor, golf courses, parking garages), and Soldier Field.
- **Personal Property Replacement Tax (8% FY03 revenue):** In 2003, \$25.4 million.
- **Recreation (3.5% of FY03 revenue):** \$12 million in revenue from recreation programs run by the CPD.
- **Marine (4.8% of FY03 revenue):** \$16.1 million in revenue from the operation of marine facilities.
- **Concessions (1.6% of FY03 revenue):** \$5.3 million in revenue from concessions such as food stands operated by the CPD.

Debt service for bonds issued by the CPD comes out of general operating funds for each year, and is a line item in the CPD budget. In FY03, payment of \$88.7 million in debt service accounted for 26% of the expense budget (Chicago Park District).

The CPD promotes corporate sponsorship of parks and parks programs on their website. Major sponsors include:

- American Bottling Company (Poland Spring, 7UP, Dr. Pepper, Gatorade, Snapple, RC) - the supplier of beverages for all CPD properties.
- Best Kosher Foods

- Bike Chicago – runs recreational and competitive biking events and training programs in CPD properties.
- Chicago Sport & Social - runs adult recreation and social programming in CPD properties.
- Chicago River Canoe & Kayak

Strategies and Lessons

The CPD management structure emphasizes quality maintenance and care of the natural environment. Combined with a Mayor who has made parks a priority, Chicago is enjoying renewed pride in living up to its motto “Urbs in horto” (City in a garden).

Chicago Park District’s independent financing authority enables it to allocate funds where they are needed most, regardless of political influence or historical precedent. For example, Focus Parks are chosen by greatest need, regardless of the designation of funds by a local elected official or strategic location. The ability to issue bonds allows the CPD to control their own capital schedule, in contrast to New York City, where the City Council and Mayor appropriate funds yearly for multi-year projects.

Learning from Chicago, what can New York City do?

- Initiate a **Focus Parks** program to bring the most needy parks in the city to an acceptable standard. For Chicago, coordinating the capital and maintenance schedules for select parks is relatively straightforward, since they control their budget allocations. While this would be more difficult in New York City due to the separation of capital and maintenance budgets, it is certainly possible. Concentrating resources on New York City’s neighborhood parks, many of which lack the private support of many higher profile parks, would increase the level of service system-wide, bringing the two standards of service that currently exist closer to one acceptable standard.
- Create a **Park District** that independently finances parks and removes politics from parks. Chicago spends about twice what New York City spends on parks and recreation for a system one quarter the size of New York’s. Clearly, parks are a priority for Chicago residents and their leaders. They are accustomed to a higher standard of service that is immune to annual budget fluctuations and the CPD delivers, despite economic or political change.

Boston: Parks and Recreation Department

Boston's Park and Recreation Department (BPR) and the new Boston Centers for Youth & Families (BCYF) maintain the parks and recreational facilities for the City of Boston. Mayor Thomas Menino announced the creation of BCYF at the start of Fiscal Year 2003 to streamline and improve the delivery of human services to the city's children, youth and families while reducing costs during the fiscal downturn.

The restructuring enables the BPR to focus more on landscape maintenance and beautification and the BCYF to focus on service delivery and youth advocacy. An added objective of the reorganization of BCYF is building partnerships and securing additional resources to expand their programs beyond city funding.

Organizational Structure and Overall Plan

"The Mission of the Department of Parks and Recreation is to maintain clean, green, safe, accessible and well programmed park land for the City's residents."

"The Mission of the Boston Centers for Youth & Families is to work with local community center councils, agencies, businesses and residents to provide quality facilities and comprehensive programs that promote the health and well-being of children, youth and their families" (City of Boston).

The BPR is a Mayoral agency currently headed by Acting Commissioner Antonia Pollak. Divisions of Maintenance, External Affairs, Cemetery, Policy, and Administration report to the Commissioner.

Boston Parks Profile	
Municipal Park Acres	2,200
Population	589,141
Municipal Park Acres Per 1000 Residents	3.73
Municipal Park Acres as a % of Total City	7.1%

The Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPR) oversees 2,200 acres of public parkland, 1,000 acres of which comprise Olmstead's Emerald Necklace. BPR properties include 215 parks, playgrounds, and athletic fields, 65 squares, 17 fountains, three active cemeteries,

16 historic burying grounds, and two golf courses. BPR currently employs 224 staff (FTE).

Organizationally, the BPR is overseen by the Chief of Basic Citywide Services for the City of Boston. At the start of FY 03, the Recreation Unit of the BPR was transferred to the newly created Boston Centers for Youth & Families (BCYF) under Human Services. The BPR retains oversight of the majority of parks properties, while BCYF now operates and maintains the city's 43 community centers. Boston's Environment Department oversees the protection, development, and maintenance of the city's natural landscapes and waterways. BCYF currently employs 390 staff (FTE).

BCYF is a consolidation of Boston Community Centers, the Mayor's Office of Community Partnerships, the Boston 2:00 to 6:00 After-School Initiative, and the Recreation Division of the city's Parks and Recreation Department. An Executive Director oversees the organization, which consists of six divisions: Administration, Community Capacity Building, Sports & Recreation, Youth Development, After-School/Out-of-School Time, and Child & Family Services.



Evaluation

Within the maintenance division of the BPR, properties are divided into five grounds maintenance regions that are responsible for upkeep of parkland. Each district is divided into three to four subregions, which are held directly accountable for maintenance through Boston's Parks Inspection Program (BPIP).

BPIP was modeled on New York City's PIP evaluation program. In Boston, park features are divided into two categories:

- Appearance: measured by 5 indicators
 - Litter/glass, signage, graffiti, weeds, grass areas
- Condition: measured by 8 indicators
 - Pathways, Play Courts, Play Equipment, Fountains/Spray Units, Benches, Fences, Trees/Shrubs, Ballfields

For a site to pass the appearance category, it must receive a 60% or better in appearance (acceptable in 3 of 5 indicators). To pass the condition category, a site must receive a 75% or better (acceptable in 6 of 8 indicators). PIP randomly selects approximately 20% of parks properties per month drawn equally from the five regions. Each location receives two inspections per year.

Inspection records are kept internally as performance tracking measures for the BPR, and released in aggregate on an annual basis to evaluate past acceptability and cleanliness and project future targets. In FY02, the overall rating for cleanliness and condition over all 5 regions was 78%. FY03's level of service is anticipated to be 75%. Records are also kept on maintenance requests; in FY02 87% of maintenance requests were completed on schedule and in FY03 it is anticipated to be 80% (City of Boston).

Partnerships

The BPR's work is aided and complemented by a number of different private organizations that focus on specific issues, as well as citywide groups, the largest of which is the Boston Greenspace Alliance. Founded in 1984, the Alliance advocates and serves as the policy watchdog for green spaces in Boston. The BPR is a key policy advisor and community liaison to the Central Artery "Big Dig" open space development process, serving on several oversight committees.

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy was established in 1996 to restore and preserve the network of land and water parks designed by Frederick Law Olmstead that stretch through the City of Boston and the Town of Brookline, MA. The Conservancy was modeled after the Central Park Conservancy and the Prospect Park Alliance in New York City.

The BPR also operates a 635-PARK customer service line to volunteer, report complaints, request trees, request inspections of trees, or make other inquiries.

Funding

Over the last 10 years, the BPR implemented a \$120 million capital rehabilitation of Boston's park system, targeting every tot lot and the majority of ball fields and courts.

In FY03, funding for the activities of the BPR is split between the BPR (\$13.8 million) and the BCYF (\$19.1 million). Total city funding for both agencies comprises 1.8% of Boston's operating budget. Due to the move of the Recreation division to BCYF, the BPR FY03 budget is \$1.2 million less than FY02.

Boston's departmental budgets are not disaggregated by funding source. The citywide revenue breakdown is as follows:

- 54.3% from the property tax levy;
- 26.8% from State aid;
- 4.2% from excises on the registration of motor vehicles, the sale of jet fuel, and hotel rooms;
- 3.3% from fines; and
- 9.1% from other sources.

In addition to revenue from the city budget, Boston maintains an External Funds Budget of funds not deposited into the city's general fund (not included in the total figures above). These funds are either special grants from state or federal governments, or private contributions. Three such sources of external funding are associated with the BPR, totaling \$3.1 million in FY03:

- **Floodlighting Fees:** \$100,000 in revenue in FY03 from operating floodlights for night events;
- **Fund for Parks and Recreation:** \$1.8 million in revenue in FY03 from fund established in 1983 for the purpose of furthering the maintenance and preservation of Boston public parks and to provide recreational programs to the residents of Boston;
- **Parkman Trust Fund:** \$1.2 million in revenue in FY03 from trust that provides annual funds to maintain and improve major parks such as Boston Common, the Public Garden, Franklin Park, the Fens, etc., including tree work, repairs to roads, turf, and funding for maintenance employees working in designated parks.

Nine External Funding Sources are associated with the BCYF, totaling \$3.2 million. (Only those programs related to parks and recreation are listed):

- **After School Programs:** \$120,000 in FY03 from the state Department of Education to fund after school programs in community centers.
- **Community Child Care:** \$844,000 in FY03 to fund child care programs that develop a child's emotional, creative, cognitive, and physical abilities in Boston's community centers.
- **James M. Curley Recreation Center:** \$239,000 in FY03 to enhance the quality of life for South Boston residents through recreation, education, child care, and senior services 362 days per year.
- **Safe Futures:** \$1.3 million in FY03 to programs that prevent and control juvenile delinquency by reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors for children in select neighborhoods.

Strategies and Lessons

Boston's willingness to re-envision the structure of its parks and recreation programs into separate departments should be instructive to the City of New York. Though Boston is a smaller city with a smaller budget and parks system than New York City, the reconfiguration of recreation services within the BPR and the consolidation of duplicative functions is a good example of innovative governance during tight fiscal times.

Boston has made parks and open spaces an integral part of the Central Artery project ("the Big Dig"). Over 250 acres of reclaimed land running through central Boston will be turned into parks and open space once the highway project is complete. The priority placed on green space as part of the overall redevelopment plan sets an important precedent for large-scale development projects in urban centers.

Learning from Boston, what can New York City do?

- **Promote and foster interagency collaboration and entertain consolidation of tasks where appropriate.** Boston Mayor Thomas Menino requested his staff to think broadly about ways to better meet the needs of his constituents in a period of fiscal constraint. Recognizing the multiple agencies and mayoral commissions were catering to the same populations of children and families, the Mayor decided consolidation in the Boston Centers for Youth and Families (BCYF) would both save money and improve service delivery. The new BCYF coordinates programming to better serve the public. In New York City's tight fiscal times, such flexibility could result in similar cost savings and service benefits.
- **Require that parks and open space be incorporated into all major development and redevelopment projects.** The redevelopment of Lower Manhattan and the Mayor's plan for Lower Manhattan emphasize the need for parks and green spaces to create communities. Rather than making such areas a priority, new green space in development projects can be written into law. Active interaction with the Planning Commission can result in parks as an integral part of residential and commercial developments.

Conclusion – Next Steps for New York City

Trends in other City Park Systems

Though the Department of Parks and Recreation performs minor miracles on a daily basis with the limited resources available to them, there are additional ways to improve the efficacy of the agency. This report has highlighted successful strategies from other cities that would be useful additions to the management and funding strategies of the New York City Parks Department. The following themes have emerged as areas for innovation and improvement:

- **Long-Term Planning and Needs Assessments**

Other urban areas are thinking strategically about long-term planning. San Francisco is leading the way with their innovative “Great Parks for a Great City” Assessment Project. The City and County of San Francisco realized the need for a holistic assessment of the parks system and organized capital needs. This process also took into consideration the changing demographics and current recreational interests of the City so that the recommendations would reflect and meet the changing needs of the population. In addition, the City worked hand in hand with community-based organizations to ensure that constituent input was integrated into the final plans. Perhaps most importantly, this process was mandated by the citizens of San Francisco, passed as a citywide proposition and is currently a part of the City Charter.

Chicago has also recently undergone a strategic planning process for the expansion of green space in Chicago. Looking across the city for ways to improve access to open space, a master plan for acquisition and funding was released in 1998.

The precedent for an inventory of park and recreation services has been set in NYC. In 2002, Council member David Yassky introduced legislation requiring the City to inventory the state of all its waterfront property (Intro. 0065 – 2002) (See Appendix for legislation text). New York City has not undergone any wholesale park and recreation assessment project since the 1960s.

- **Greater Accountability to the Public**

Both Chicago and San Francisco are moving in great strides towards a full accountable assessment system for park service provision and a defined level of service that is accessible to the public.

San Francisco’s “Park Scan” project is a trendsetter. A local nonprofit organization, the Neighborhood Parks Council, spearheaded this effort, developing, in conjunction with the Parks Department, a comprehensive evaluation mechanism. The Neighborhood Parks Council coordinates the participation of constituents, providing them with equipment and training. This program is progressive in a number of ways. First and foremost, it makes publicly accessible the performance and condition of every park (once rated) to any member of the public who has access to the web. Additionally, it defines a minimum level of service that has been agreed upon by public officials and the public (through a nonprofit coordinator) and that can be expected by every constituent. Finally, it promotes the coordination of multiple agencies and nonprofit partners towards the effective management and maintenance of park properties. Once results are collected and posted by the Neighborhood Parks Council, they are sent to the RPD and other agencies, whose responses to any needed services are also posted on line. This coordinated effort in public accountability and transparency is a tremendous contribution to urban park management models.

Though not as far along as San Francisco, Chicago is also moving towards greater transparency and accountability in park service provision. Chicago parks ranks repair needs on a scale of 1 to

5 and will be integrating these repair and maintenance needs into the website so that constituents will be able to track maintenance requests and repairs.

Although the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) does evaluate its properties using a comprehensive program, ratings are aggregated and published only at the citywide level in the Mayor's Management Report. By contrast, these other cities provide constituents access to performance at the park level. Additionally, constituents are active participants in the accountability process. New York City should consider implementing a similar program potentially integrating with New Yorkers for Parks "Report Card on Parks" project, which has as its three main goals:

- ***To provide communities with an assessment of how their park is performing in comparison to other parks in the City.*** *This easily accessible on-line information will help communities advocate for improved services in their neighborhood parks.*
- ***Assess park performance from year to year against a defined minimum level of service.*** *This will create accountability for providing both this defined level of service as well as improvements for every park throughout the five boroughs.*
- ***To spark debate among communities, public agencies and advocates about how best to improve and maintain neighborhood parks in need.*** *By highlighting those high, as well as low-performing parks, best practices can be identified and implemented in select parks and incorporated system-wide. Further, this analysis encourages a more efficient distribution of limited resources toward our parks and playgrounds that are most "in need" and assists in developing strategies for additional funding sources.*

- **Enhanced Funding Strategies – Dedicated and Consistent Funding Streams**

Other urban areas are finding creative ways to inject needed funding into their park systems. Chicago has long been a leader in this area as a city with a separate 'Parks District', which puts them in a unique position to plan and fund its activities. This district allows the city to issue its own bonds to fund park capital projects and, additionally, legislation established at the state-level establishes a separate taxing body creating a dedicated funding stream. [

San Francisco, while not entirely funded through dedicated streams, is funded through an interesting mix of sources. Though reliant on the General Fund for almost a quarter of its operating budget in 2003, San Francisco parks also benefit from a number of dedicated funding streams including revenues generated by the Department. Additionally, San Francisco is able to issue bonds for capital cost expenses through Proposition C and also receives dedicated funding for maintenance and acquisition through the Open Space Fund, generated from property tax revenues.

New York City's parks do not benefit from any direct revenue streams, neither concession revenues generated by the Department nor a dedicated funding stream from some tax revenue. The trend towards a reliable consistent source of funding for park services is clear. Though a dedicated tax for parks is unlikely in the current political and fiscal climate, the parks system would immediately benefit from the return of concession revenue - \$60 million in FY2002.

This paper presents some first steps that might be taken toward an enhanced parks system in New York City. Given the current fiscal climate, innovations and smart investments of limited resources is an essential strategy toward "weathering the storm" and laying the groundwork for improved financial and political conditions.

Appendix A:
New York State Parks

City Departments of Parks and Recreation around New York State

Purpose: The aim of this document is to describe the general characteristics of the municipal agencies overseeing parks and recreation in the major urban areas of New York State besides New York City. Focus is given to the organizational structure of the departments, the size of each system (in space, staff and budget), the funding methods in each city, and each department's interactions and collaborations with other city agencies and non-profit organizations to achieve its stated mission.

This research was collected through interviews with staff members in each city, visits to select sites and internet research.

This portion of the report intends to describe the systems, not compare them.

ROCHESTER

The City of Rochester, on the banks of the Genesee River in Monroe County, operates its parks under the Department of Parks, Recreation and Human Services.

Mission:

The Division of Parks and Recreation works to offer an abundance of social, cultural and athletic programs for all ages in its parks and at its recreation centers.

STRUCTURE

Organizational Structure:

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Human Services has one Commissioner, under whom serves a Deputy Commissioner for the entire Department. There is a Director of the Division of Parks and Recreation and a Director of the Division of Human Services. Additionally there are Managers and Directors for each of the other responsibilities that fall to this department.

Facilities:

Rochester boasts over 3,500 acres of green space. It has 29 recreation/activity centers; 12 of these are Department-owned recreation centers, 8 are after-school/summer recreation programs run in local schools, and the others are sporting facilities, rinks, pools, etc. During the summer, there are 47 sites for youth programming in parks, centers and schools.

There are 50 tennis courts, three artificial ice rinks, three golf courses, and 20 swimming pools of which 7 are open throughout the winter.

Several city cemeteries, a public market, the local arena, convention center and High Falls Entertainment District all fall under the Department's jurisdiction.

Programs:

The city's recreational programming focuses on youth, ages 6-17 years, although there are opportunities for adults, families and seniors as well. The programs include childcare, seasonal day camps, homework assistance, arts and crafts, swimming instruction, softball, dance instruction, field trips, basketball, flag football, floor hockey, soccer, volleyball, ceramics, tennis, and environmental exploration.

The Department also organizes special and annual events, including: the Biz Kids youth entrepreneurial program, a language arts program, the Montage Cabaret Theater, athletic tournaments and the Stardust Dance Series.

Most programs are provided free of charge. There are fees at the ice rinks and the one Olympic-sized pool. The other pools, including the inside pools, are free.

Staff:

In the Division of Parks and Recreation there are 159 fulltime employees and 106 part-time/temp/seasonal workers. Approximately 60 of the staff members work in parks maintenance and forestry; the remainder work in recreation and administration.

FUNDING

The Department's operating funds come from annual allocations in the city budget. The FY 2003 operating budget is \$9,370,000, and the capital budget for "general rehab/renovation" is \$1.2 million. Additionally, the Mayor and City Council direct funds to specific capital renovations: this year, the Department is completing a \$9 million restoration of a downtown park and a \$4.5 million recreation center project.

During the 8 years leading up to last year, the city continually increased its allocations to parks and recreation, with an emphasis on recreation spending. In the financial turn, the city had to cut \$400,000 last year and will cut further this year.

During the years of increased funding, the Department expanded operation of their recreation centers from 5-days to 7-days-per-week. To respond to budget cuts, the Department reduced service this year to 6-days-per-week.

Most capital projects, noted one member of the Department, are proposed by the Democratic Mayor and rubberstamped by the Democratic City Council.

Revenue from the ice rinks and the swimming pool returns to the city's general fund. However, many of the Department's projects are run under Independent Enterprise Funds, which can return the profits to the project. The Public Market, a solvent entity managed by the Department, pays for its own operation through its profits; additionally, it makes "administrative payback" to the Department toward the salaries and resources dedicated toward it. Beyond that, it keeps its profits. Last year, the Public Market made \$175,000 over expenses, which went toward Department salaries and back to the Enterprise Fund.

The Blue Cross Arena, the two active cemeteries, the Convention Center and the High Falls Entertainment District—all under the auspices of the Department—operate their finances with an Enterprise Fund.

PARTNERSHIPS

Other Agencies:

The City Department of Parks, Recreation and Human Services has both an integrated and a complicated relationship with the Monroe County Parks Department. In 1961, the city turned management of its 5 largest parks over to the County under a 99-year agreement. These sites were truly regional destinations—a zoo, beach, trails, etc—, and it was deemed unfair to demand city residents fully fund them. The County, therefore, now operates these city-owned locations.

Day by day, the two Departments work closely, loaning equipment, communicating about maintenance needs. However, there are problems when the City (largely Democratic) and the County (largely Republican) have different aims.

In the city's Olmstead-designed Seneca Park resides the county-operated zoo, which was not part of the original park design. Under a 1991 Master Plan, the decision was made to expand the zoo in the non-Olmstead area of the park. Since then the county has attempted to expand the zoo into the Olmstead section, to which the city objected. The city is now suing the county over failing to thoroughly assess environmental impact or to sensitively preserve the historic area.

The city is also suing the county over the conversion of a ballroom on the upper lever of one of the large former bath-houses owned by the city and managed by the county. The county sought to turn the ballroom into a revenue-generating party venue, while the city sought a new community center.

Under the terms of the 99-year agreement, revenue from properties controlled by the county—such as the golf courses—even though owned by the city, go to the county's general fund.

Non-Profits:

The Highland Park Conservancy raises additional funds for Highland Park.

The Friends of Mount Hope raise funds, engage volunteers and advocate for Mt. Hope Cemetery, the city's oldest park. The cemetery encompasses 330 acres, 17 miles of roads, and houses 400,000 residents...more than the living population of modern-day Rochester.

Volunteers:

People for Parks is an advocacy organization that draws additional support to Rochester parks. Most of the support takes the form of volunteerism. The Department works closely with People for Parks to direct their efforts to projects in greatest need.

The Department also works with the Boy Scouts and the University of Rochester to create meaningful volunteer experiences.

The Department additionally coordinates its own corps of volunteers. Last year around 2000 volunteers supported Rochester's Parks Department through clean-up days and gardening/environmental programs.

SYRACUSE

The city of Syracuse, in Onondaga County, manages its parks under the city Department of Parks and Recreation.

Mission:

STRUCTURE

Organizational Structure:

The Department is composed of four divisions: Administration, Bureau of Parks, Division of Recreation and Division of Dog Control. Administration provides overall operational guidelines and makes all major program and policy divisions for the Department. Beneath Commissioner Driscoll—who has served since September, and before then as Deputy Commissioner since the election of the new administration the previous February—there is one Deputy, and then a Director of each of the four Divisions.

Departmental planning is achieved through a regular series of in-house seasonal sessions and budget and capital improvement task forces, as well as through collaboration with the Community Development Department and the Bureau of Research. Public and special interest groups' participation is welcome in the planning process.

Facilities:

The Department's parkland encompasses nearly 1,000 acres including 170 parks, fields, and natural areas. The Department runs all recreation centers, ice rinks, swimming pools, ballfields, tennis and basketball courts, with the exception of those run by schools

The Department categorizes two main types of park: Neighborhood Parks, which are between 2 and 14 acres and serve local residents with recreational facilities and small green areas; and Community Parks, between 15 and 75 acres, which host large recreational complexes, community gathering areas, and special events, and become the destination for residents across the city.

Programs:

Under a 1973 agreement, the city and county are responsible for the provision of different programs. The county operates zoos, beaches, trails and nature centers. The city is more "hands on" and the Department actively provides recreational, educational and cultural activities, with a focus on youth and senior services.

Most programs are provided for free. There are fees for swimming pools, ice rinks and membership in recreation leagues.

The Department directly runs and programs its own recreation centers. The only exception is performing arts programs for which it contracts local theater arts / education organizations.

Staff:

The Department has 657 staff members overall, including part-time and seasonal workers. There are 74 full-time, salaried positions in the Department.

FUNDING

The city's annual budget allocates funds to the Department. This year's operating budget is \$6,583,627. This year's capital budget is \$656,515.

Revenue generated by the Department is returned to the city's general fund. The Department has been looking into the appropriate steps to change that process as it would like to retain its revenue and direct it back to park programs.

PARTNERSHIPS

Other Agencies:

The City Department of Parks and Recreation works closely on a number of projects with the County Parks Department. Specifically, the county operates the zoo that is located in a city-owned and city-run park. Additionally, when in financial trouble, the city sold its stadium to the county, which operates it on city parkland.

Non-Profits:

There are several parks advocacy organizations that support the Department. More, these organizations secure grants for particular parks with which they are affiliated.

The city Department is looking into the creation of a non-profit foundation that can obtain additional funding for the Department through donations, fundraisers and grants. The Department would use this revenue specifically to waive fees for low-income Syracuse residents as well as to offset general operating expenses. The Onondaga County Parks Department has a “friends of” organization that applies for additional grants for the system. The city will model its foundation after the county group.

Volunteers:

Several park associations and “friends-of” groups help clean and care for local parks.

ALBANY

New York’s Capital City of Albany has a separate Department of Recreation, and maintains its parks under its Department of General Services.

Mission:

The mission of the Department of Recreation is to coordinate, plan and develop recreational and educational services for the youth of the City of Albany. The Department will work cooperatively with the schools, youth organizations, parents and other community resources to enrich and further develop the lives of our young people.

STRUCTURE

Organizational Structure:

There used to be a separate Parks Department that supervised the Recreation division of the department until administrative reform and consolidation created the new system.

The Department of Recreation has one Commissioner, John D’Antonio. Beneath Commissioner D’Antonio serve a Director of each recreation center and a Director of each program.

The Department of General Services is responsible for the maintenance of parks, but not for any programming. It is also responsible for certain maintenance on Albany streets, including street trees. It has one Commissioner, Willard Bruce, who has served as a Mayoral appointee for the last 10 years. Under the Commissioner serve a Superintendent of Streets, a Deputy Commissioner who supervises work crews, and two Park Supervisors—one for uptown parks and one for downtown parks—who direct maintenance works at the park sites.

Facilities:

The city of Albany has over 80 recreation areas on over 200 acres of parkland. It has two major parks: Washington Park, which has a lake house, and Lincoln park, which has the city’s largest swimming pool. There are little parks and playgrounds scattered throughout the city.

The Department of Recreation runs 6 main recreation centers that are open after-school and at night and are geared toward city youth. The Department also provides recreation and park programs to youth and seniors and supervises all City playgrounds, teen centers, boxing program, swimming pools, Swinburne Skating Rink, Public Bath No. 2, Bleecker Stadium and Ridgefield Park.

Programs:

All regular programming is run by the Department of Recreation. In addition to recreation centers, homework assistance, swimming, skating and boxing instruction, and other educational and cultural opportunities, the Department also runs athletic leagues for teenagers who do not play on high school teams.

In the summer, the Department runs full-time summer camps in parks around the city.

The Parks Division has a special event office that issues permits for additional programs in parks. It also runs several of its own annual special events, including the Tulip Festival and the First Nights celebration.

All services are free.

Staff:

There are 147 staff members in the Department of Recreation.

During the summer programming, the Department uses city funds to hire college and high school students to provide the additional staff support to keep centers, programs, parks and playgrounds open all day and into the evening.

FUNDING

The annual city budgeting process directs funds to the Department of Recreation and to the Department of General Services. The Mayor and City Council detail a specific budget for the Division of Parks within the Department of General Services.

The Parks Division's budget this year is \$2.5 million, strictly for maintenance. There are a variety of other revenue streams as well. Several million dollars are spent each year on capital improvements. The golf courses have a separate operating budget of \$866,000. Lincoln Park is in the process of a \$3-4 million renovation.

All revenues generated by the Department from the golf courses, special events, and other sources, return to the city's general fund.

PARTNERSHIPS

Other Agencies:

The Department of Recreation and Division of Parks work very closely, especially in the summer, to coordinate programming and activities in city parkland.

Non-Profits:

A handful of friends-of-parks organizations have formed around particular parks, most prominently the Washington Parks Conservancy, which emphasizes the historical significance of the park, participates in strategic planning for the park, and helps to raise additional funding. The Commissioner of General Services sits on the Conservancy's board.

Volunteers:

A number of neighborhood groups fill in city services by helping in community clean-up efforts and local park programming. Community-based programming is coordinated through the permitting office of the Parks Division, not through the Department of Recreation, which supervises only its own activities.

Appendix B:
Friends of New York's Environmental Protection Fund

I in 9: The Long Island Breast Cancer Action Coalition
Adirondack Council
Adirondack Mountain Club
American Farmland Trust
Appalachian Mountain Club
Arbor Hill Environmental Justice Corp.
Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks
Brentwood/Bay Shore Breast Cancer Coalition
Catskill Center for Conservation and Development
Columbia Land Conservancy
Concerned Citizens of Montauk
Downtown Bronx Eco Development Corporation
East End Forever
Environmental Advocates of New York
Environmental Defense
Federation of NY Solid Waste Associations
Finger Lakes Land Trust
Friends of the Shawangunks
Genesee Land Trust
Group for the South Fork
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater
Lake George Land Conservancy
Land Trust Alliance
League of Women Voters of the Hamptons
Long Island Association
Long Island Drinking Water Coalition
Long Island Pine Barrens Society
Lower Mohawk Land Conservancy
New Yorkers for Parks
New York Chapter, Solid Waste Association of North America
New York Conservation Council
New York Farm Bureau
New York – New Jersey Trail Conference
New York Parks and Conservation Association
New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)
New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling
New York State Association for Solid Waste Management
New York State Urban and Community Forestry Council
North Fork Environmental Council
NYCEJA (Hugh Hogan)
North Salem Land Preservation Alliance
Open Space Council
Open Space Institute
Open Space Preservation Trust
Orange County Land Trust
Otsego Land Trust
Peconic Baykeeper
Residents' Committee to Protect the Adirondacks
Residents for a More Beautiful Port Washington
RiverKeeper

Save Open Space Now 2000
Scenic Hudson
Serpentine Art and Nature Commons, Inc.
Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership
Sierra Club – Atlantic Chapter
Southampton Baymen's Association
The Shawangunk Conservancy
The Nature Conservancy
The Trust for Public Land
Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust
Wallkill Valley Land Trust
West Branch Conservation Association
Westchester Land Trust
West Islip Breast Cancer Coalition for Long Island
W. Hayward Burns Environmental Education Center
Woodstock Land Conservancy

Appendix C:
Alternate Models of Parks Financing

The following local financing tools are currently being used to fund maintenance activities in various urban areas around the country.

- **Special Assessment District**
 - Chicago Park District
 - Atlanta Park District (proposed)
 - Los Angeles County
 - Minneapolis: publicly elected park board governs district (funding via property tax)
- **Impact Fees**
 - One-time charges that private developers must pay to local government in order to undertake their projects. Requires state legislation enabling municipalities to assess fees.
- **Property Tax Financing**
 - Seattle voted for an 8-year “Pro Parks Levy” in 2001 to fund parks acquisition, development, environmental stewardship, maintenance, and programming. Oversight is by a seven member Mayor-appointed volunteer board that consults with and advises the Superintendent of Parks and holds public hearings.
 - East Bay Regional Park District (includes Alameda and Contra Costa counties). This form of taxation was put into place following the passage of Prop 13, which banned property taxes. It covers maintenance for all public places (not exclusively parks). Governed by a seven member publicly elected Board of Directors. Each Director represents a specific district.
 - Minneapolis parks district is funded through property taxes. In 2001, 7% of property tax paid by Minneapolis residents was allocated to the board. 71% of the total revenue of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is generated by property tax revenue (remainder funded as follows: local government 20%, state grants 4%, other 5%).
 - Ohio gives local communities property taxing authority specifically for parks
- **User Fee Financing**
 - New York City’s implementation of a fee membership for Recreation Centers over the past year qualifies as user fee financing, though it is not retained by the Department
- **Real Estate Transfer Tax**
 - NY State Real Estate Transfer Tax funds NY’s Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) at approximately \$125 million/year. The EPF contains three separate accounts: Parks, Open Space and Recycling & Solid Waste.
- **Motor Vehicle Tax**
 - Though motor vehicle taxes are uniformly applied by states, funding can be used for city parks. In Baltimore motor vehicle taxes are dedicated to covering costs of street tree planting and park projects related to transportation. The city receives funds annually through county appropriation of the state levied tax.
- **Cell Phone tax:**
 - Virginia Beach, VA is using cell phone tax funds to purchase agricultural conservation easements. The tax is also funded by voter-approved property tax assessments.
- **Income Tax Financing**
 - Enhances park usership
 - Limited use to date: suburban communities only. Not likely to happen in NYC.
- **Tax Increment Financing**
 - Mechanism used to stimulate economic development. A TIF district is established with specific improvements and plans in mind. Bonds are issues to fund the implementation of plans. Theoretically, improvements spur increased assessments and property tax revenues. The increased tax revenue (above the level before the TIF project began) is then used to service the debt.
 - TIF has been used to finance a wide array pf projects – both public and private. For example, Chicago helped to finance the renovation of the University of Illinois at Chicago (\$50 million in 2000); Los Angeles helped finance the renovation of the Central Library (\$135 million in the early 1990s)
- **Sales & Use Tax**

Appendix D:

New York City Council

Intro. No. 65-A; to require an annual report of city-owned property in the waterfront

By Council Members Yassky, Baez, Davis, Fidler, Gennaro, Jackson, Katz, Lanza, Perkins, Quinn, Reed, Reyna, Rivera, Rodriguez, Sanders Jr., Brewer, DeBlasio and Golden; also Council Members Addabbo Jr., Nelson, Clarke, McMahon, Avella and Gioia

Title

A Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to the preparation of reports on city waterfront property and citywide needs.

Body

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Subdivision d of section 204 of the New York city charter, as added by the voters at the general election held on November 7, 1989, is amended to read as follows:

d. The statement of needs shall be accompanied by a map together with explanatory text, indicating (1) the location and current use of all city-owned real property, including the appendix with respect to city waterfront property described in subdivision i of this section; (2) all final commitments relating to the disposition or future use of city-owned real property, including assignments by the department of citywide administrative services pursuant to clause b of subdivision three of section sixteen hundred two, and (3) to the extent such information is available to the city, the location of health and social service facilities operated by the state of New York or the federal government or pursuant to written agreement on behalf of the state or federal government. Information which can be presented most effectively in text may be presented in this manner. In addition to being transmitted with the statement of needs pursuant to subdivision a of this section, such map shall be kept on file with the department of city planning and shall be available for public inspection and copying. The map with explanatory text shall be updated [on at least an annual basis] in each year ending with an even number.

§2. Section 204 of the New York city charter is amended by adding thereto a new subdivision i to read as follows:

i. The map and explanatory text accompanying the statement of needs shall include an appendix with respect to city waterfront property, which shall consist of a list indicating for each such property its borough and map location; street address; tax block and lot; applicable zoning district; approximate area in square feet; number of structures, if any; current user and use; and such other information as the departments of city planning and citywide administrative services deem appropriate. For purposes of this subdivision, the term "city waterfront property" shall mean property owned or leased by the city, which is seaward of the first upland mapped and improved street, provided that it shall also include areas upland of such street which would be contiguous with the property but for such intervening street where such areas are in the same use.

§3. Notwithstanding any provision of subdivision i of section 204 of the New York city charter, as added by section two of this local law, to the contrary, the appendix with respect to city waterfront property accompanying the map and explanatory text prepared in conjunction with the statement of needs pursuant to subdivision d of such section and submitted pursuant to subdivision a of such section not

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later than the fifteenth day of November, two thousand two, may consist of a list indicating for each such property: (i) its borough and map location; street address; tax block and lot; and applicable zoning district; and (ii) such other information described in such subdivision i as the departments of city planning and citywide administrative services deemed practicable to include.

§4. This local law shall become effective immediately upon enactment and the provisions of sections one and two of this local law related to the appendix with respect to city waterfront property shall expire and be of no further force and effect on the thirty-first day of December, two thousand eight.

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